

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSM-03 SSO-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 EB-07 A-01 AID-05 CCO-00 DHA-02 OC-06
OMB-01 OPR-02 SCA-01 MCT-01 SY-05 USSS-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
IO-13 TRSE-00 COME-00 IGA-02 /111 W
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O P 221452Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2584
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 188
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
CIA WASHDC
COMSIXTHFLT
COMPHIBRON SIX
COM THREE FOUR MAU
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8972

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TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION DECEMBER 21-22

REF: BEIRUT 8938 (DTG 201436Z DEC 76)
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1. SUMMARY. PALESTINIANS AND SYRIANS CLASHED DEC 21, AND
SHELLS FROM SHATILA AND SABRA CAMPS LANDED IN EAST BEIRUT.
EFFORTS TO SOLVE HEAVY ARMS DILEMMA CONTINUE WITH ARAFAT
REPORTEDLY ATTEMPTING CONVINCE REJECTIONISTS TO HAND IN
HEAVY WEAPONS. AN NAHAR PRINTING PRESS, ON WHICH NUMBER

OF BEIRUT PAPERS DEPEND, STILL CLOSED; UPI AND NEWSWEEK FUNCTIONING. BINT JBAYL AND MARJAYUN IN SOUTH SHELLED DEC 19-20, AND SKIRMISH AT SEA BETWEEN ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS REPORTED NEAR TYRE. AL-HUSS RETURNED TO BEIRUT AFTER VISITING KUWAIT AND SAUDI ARABIA AND REPORTS SUCCESS IN OBTAINING THEIR HELP IN A JOINT ARAB PROGRAM FOR ASSISTANCE. PARLIAMENT EXPECTED APPROVE NEW CABINET DEC 23. NEXT SITREP TO BE PUBLISHED DEC 27. END SUMMARY.

2. PALESTINIAN-SYRIAN CLASHES. FIGHTING BROKE OUT DEC 21 IN AND AROUND PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS IN BEIRUT. PRESS SPECULATES INITIAL CLASHES OCCURRED BETWEEN SAIQA AND REJECTION FRONT ELEMENTS, WITH ASF FORCES LATER MOVING IN TO CONTAIN FIGHTING. HOWEVER, RELIABLE SOURCE TOLD BY TATAH OFFICIAL THAT SYRIANS PURPOSELY ANTAGONIZED PALESTINIANS BY SENDING SIX OR SEVEN SYRIAN ASF SOLDIERS TO PALESTINIAN AREA NEAR BIR HASSAN. WHEN PALESTINIANS OBJECTED, FIGHTING STARTED BETWEEN PFLP ELEMENTS AND SYRIANS DURING WHICH PALESTINIANS LOST 36 KILLED AND 58 WOUNDED. FATAH DID NOT JOIN FIGHTING. ACCORDING TO AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT FROM GENERALLY RELIABLE SOURCE, SHELLS FIRED FROM SHATILA-SABRA AREAS LANDED IN EAST BEIRUT; FIVE FELL IN ASHRAFIYA, THREE-FOUR IN DAWRA, AND FOUR IN DIKWANI. OBSERVER UNABLE TO DETERMINE IF SHELLS WERE MORTAR OR ROCKET FIRE. SOME SCHOOLS IN ASHRAFIYA CLOSED DEC 21 AS RESULT OF SHELLING. MAIN AIRPORT ROAD WAS TEMPORARILY CLOSED DURING CLASHES.

3. HEAVY ARMS COLLECTION. IN SPITE OF RECENT CLASHES, EFFORTS CONTINUE TOWARD A SOLUTION OF WEAPONS COLLECTION ISSUE. THE THREE AMBASSADORS IN QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE
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MET DEC 21 WITH RESISTANCE LEADERS HANI AL-HASSAN AND ABU JIHAD TO DISCUSS HANDOVER OF HEAVY ARMS, AFTER WHICH SAUDI AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH PROGRESS OF DISCUSSIONS. SYRIAN REPRESENTATIVE COL AL-KHOLY DID NOT ATTEND MEETING. AL KIFAH AL ARABI REPORTS KFUR FRONT GAVE PRELIMINARY APPROVAL TO ARMS TURNOVER, BUT IS RESERVING FINAL DECISION FOR ELABORATION OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE HANDOVER PLANS. PRESS ALSO SAYS THAT YASSIR ARAFAT, NOW TOURING SEVERAL ARAB STATES, REQUESTED QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE TO POSTPONE DECISION AGAIN UNTIL HE HAS HAD MORE TIME TO PERSUADE "REJECTION" GROUPS TO HAND IN WEAPONS. REJECTIONIST PUBLICATIONS, INCLUDING AL HADAF (PFLP), CONTINUE TAKE STAND NO GUERRILLAS SHOULD HAND OVER WEAPONS. ARAFAT EXPECTED RETURN TO BEIRUT DEC 22.

4. OCCUPATION OF PRESS OFFICES. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR STAFFERS PERMITTED TO RETURN TO WORK, BUT PAPER HAS NOT REAPPEARED AND PROBABLY WILL NOT UNTIL USE OF AN NAHAR PRESSES, WHICH

REMAIN CLOSED, CAN BE NEGOTIATED. UPI AND NEWSWEEK UTILIZED THEIR OFFICES IN AN NAHAR BUILDING DEC 20 WITHOUT INTERFERENCE. AL LIWA REPORTED DEC 21 THAT PRESS CLOSURE WOULD NOT BE LIMITED TO WEST BEIRUT BUT WOULD INCLUDE KFUR FRONT PUBLICATIONS AND RADIO STATIONS. AL KIFAH AL ARABI SAYS PRESS SYNDICATE MET DEC 20 AND ADOPTED TWO PROPOSALS: 1) ESTABLISHMENT OF CENSORSHIP COMMITTEE WITHIN SYNDICATE; AND 2) ASF WITHDRAWAL FROM PRESS OFFICES AND PRINTING PLANTS.

5. THE SOUTH. AL KIFAH AL ARABI SAYS ISRAELI AND RIGHTIST ARTILLERY SHELLED BINT JBAYL AND MARJAYUN DEC 19 AND 20 AND THAT LEFTISTS RETURNED FIRE. PRESS REPORTS SKIRMISH BETWEEN ISRAELI PATROL BOATS AND SHORE-BASED PALESTINIAN-LEFTISTS NEAR TYRE. AL AMAL CLAIMED ISRAELIS TRIED TO INTERCEPT SHIP HEADED FOR PALESTINIAN-CONTROLLED TYRE AND CARRYING ARMS FOR PFLP WHEN CLASH OCCURRED. WE UNDERSTAND THAT LT AHMED KHATIB, COMMANDER OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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LAA, HELD MEETING OF HIS STAFF IN SIDON SHORTLY AFTER HIS RETURN FROM VISIT TO LIBYA. MILITARY SOURCES REPORT THAT KHATIB WENT TO LIBYA TO REQUEST CONTINUED FINANCIAL AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT SUPPORT FROM LIBYA. IN STATEMENT TO AL KIFAH AL ARABI, FOLLOWING SIDON MEETING, KHATIB BLAMED ISRAELIS FOR RECENT ESCALATION OF FIGHTING IN SOUTH LEBANON AND CLAIMED IT WAS AN ATTEMPT TO SABOTAGE THE CEASE-FIRE. HE ALSO STATED THAT LAA WOULD CONTINUE THEIR ACTIVITIES IN FORWARD AREAS OF SOUTH AND APPEALED TO CHRISTIANS THERE TO END THEIR COOPERATION WITH ISRAELIS.

6. RECONSTRUCTION. PRIME MINISTER AL-HUSS BRIEFED PRESIDENT SARKIS DEC 21 ON HIS RETURN FROM AN AID-SEEKING MISSION TO SAUDI ARABIA AND KUWAIT. AL-HUSS SAID HE WAS SATISFIED WITH RESULTS OF TRIP AND MADE KNOWN HIS INTENTION TO VISIT OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES TO REACH "A WORKING FORMULA ON WHICH ALL WILL AGREE OVER THE JOINT ARAB PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE." BEIRUT PAPERS REPORTED ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT ARAB FUND FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF LEBANON WHICH WOULD BE FUNDED BY OIL-PRODUCING ARAB COUNTRIES. AL-HUSS' POSITION AS PRESIDENT OF THE BANK FOR INDUSTRIAL AND TOURISTIC DEVELOPMENT WILL BE FILLED BY ABDEL RAHMAN TAYYARAH, CURRENT HEAD OF GOVERNMENT INSPECTION DEPARTMENT, ACCORDING TO PRESS. BEIRUT PAPERS ALSO REPORTING THAT LEBANESE CENTRAL BANK RAISED MONEY IN CIRCULATION TO ABOUT LL 3 BILLION, THUS DOUBLING AMOUNT IN CIRCULATION DURING WAR. ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE BY PRESIDENT OF STOCK EXCHANGE BROKERS, MUHAMMED KAMEL TABBARA.

7. PARLIAMENT IS STILL EXPECTED TO MEET DEC 23, AT VILLA MANSOUR, FOR PRESENTATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT'S "MINISTERIAL DOCUMENT" AND VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. WE ARE TOLD THAT REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY LEGISLATIVE POWERS, BUT NOT FOR DECLARATION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY, WILL BE INTEGRAL PART OF STATEMENT, AND THAT IT SHOULD BE APPROVED. JUNBLATT AND RAYMOND EDDE, AND
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THEIR RESPECTIVE FOLLOWERS, ARE NOT EXPECTED TO ATTEND.

8. BEIRUT WILL PUBLISH NO SITREP UNTIL DEC 27. WE WISH ALL OUR READERS A HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON AND A PEACEFUL NEW YEAR.
HOUGHTON

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